



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase IX
Laws of Minnesota 2017 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 12/28/2021

Project Title: Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase IX

Funds Recommended: \$5,603,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(b)

Appropriation Language: \$5,603,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire in fee and restore lands for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96 or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Eran Sandquist

Title: State Coordinator - MN

Organization: Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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Location Information

County Location(s): Stearns, Lyon, Sibley, Grant, McLeod, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Jackson, Yellow Medicine, Murray, Watonwan, Redwood, Chippewa, Swift, Fillmore, Wright, Cottonwood, Pope, Meeker, Martin, Nobles, Brown, Douglas and Goodhue.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Narrative**Abstract**

This proposal accelerates the protection of 1,012 acres of strategic prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitats as State Wildlife Management Areas open to public hunting.

Design and Scope of Work

The pressures from development, industry, and agriculture continue to mount on wildlife habitat within the farmland regions of Minnesota. In fact, despite our collective investments in conservation, it is believed that many of the agricultural counties in Minnesota are continuing to experience a net loss of wildlife habitat. This unfortunate reality is currently being exacerbated by conversion of lands expiring out of CRP. Over 500,000 acres of CRP in Minnesota are set to expire in the next four years, with lower authority to re-enroll throughout the life of the Farm Bill. Now, more than ever, is the time to accelerate our investments in permanently protected high quality public habitat complexes that will protect, maintain, and increase Minnesota's wildlife populations. Providing public areas for Minnesotans to hunt, trap, fish and otherwise recreate in the outdoors are urgent needs and is fundamental to ensure Minnesota's outdoor heritage is passed on to future generations. In addition, these public areas help bolster the economy as hunters in Minnesota support over 12,400 jobs and spend \$733 million annually.

To help slow and reverse the loss of habitat and declining wildlife populations, Pheasants Forever (PF) and our partners will protect (fee acquisition from willing sellers) 3,400 acres of high priority grassland (native prairie if available), wetland, and wildlife habitat as state Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) throughout the pheasant range of Minnesota. PF is striving to build landscape level habitat complexes that will protect and sustain wildlife populations. Many of the potential projects are additions to existing WMAs which were originally acquired in partnership with MNDNR, local PF chapters, and conservation partners.

Projects were developed and selected in conjunction with local and regional DNR staff. All projects will meet standards and requirements for inclusion into the WMA system and DNR Commissioner approval will be received for any project funded under this proposal. In addition to meeting the minimum WMA standards, additional criteria were used to develop the potential project list including: 1) Does the parcel contain habitat restoration potential that will result in an increase in wildlife populations? 2) Does the parcel build upon existing investments in public and private land habitat (landscape scale significance)? 3) Does the parcel contain significant natural communities or will it protect or buffer significant natural communities? 4) Does the parcel have the potential and focus for habitat protection and restoration in the future? 5) Does the parcel provide multiple benefits (recreation, access, water control, water quality, lake shore, local community support, etc.)?

Providing high quality habitat and keeping future management concerns in mind, all acquisitions will be restored and/or enhanced to as high quality as practicable, with the belief that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result in lower management costs. Acquired croplands will be permanently retired and restored to diverse grasslands and wetlands habitat. Restorations will also consider the needs of the monarch butterfly and native pollinators.

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

Grant funding will primarily focus on prairie wetland and grassland habitats previously converted for row crop agriculture. Priority will also be given to protecting parcels with remnant native prairie. The well documented and number one threat to all of Minnesota's wildlife species is habitat loss and fragmentation. This program focuses on the protection of priority grasslands and wetlands that build upon existing investments in habitat. The aim is to increase functionality and productivity of grassland landscapes (e.g. Grassland Bird Conservation Area Concept) to maximize quality habitat for game production, for the benefit of important wildlife species, and for Minnesotans to recreate on.

This strategic acquisition and restoration of lands adjacent to existing prairie wetland complexes will increase the overall size of the habitat complex, reducing edge and tremendously benefiting those species that rely on larger blocks of habitat including the marbled godwit, bobolink, and grasshopper sparrow. Post restoration the wetland and high diversity grassland complexes will provide habitat for a myriad of species including waterfowl, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, ring-necked pheasants, pollinators and monarchs. Other species of concern benefiting from this project include the prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk, and yellow rails.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This proposal utilizes the best science and modeling available to build or expand corridors and complexes. To scale this large programmatic grant to local landscape level priorities Pheasants Forever works in close collaboration with the local area managers of the MN DNR, USFWS, and other Minnesota partners in addition to utilizing SWAAT scores to build on existing grassland and wetland conservation efforts in a science based approach. This proposal will continue to leverage spatial data and the power of GIS to identify acquisitions based on landscape level priority areas. Preference is given to project sites that help deliver the goals of other recognized conservation initiatives and plans. Data layers (i.e. MN Biological Survey, Natural Heritage Database, MN Prairie Plan, Wellhead Protection Areas, HAPET Scores, Pheasant Action Plan, existing protected land, etc.) will be used to help justify projects and focus areas as well as to inform decisions when allocating scarce dollars for habitat protection, restoration and enhancement. If there are species of concern located on or adjacent to project tracts as identified in the MBS layer we take an extra consideration when developing proposals and this ultimately may change the way we look at and prioritize project tracts. In addition, if there are rare or sensitive species on site we will be able to identify those, communicate with the appropriate long-term land managers, and ensure we're having a positive impact on these species.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Does this program include leveraged funding?

-

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
Annual	PF	150,000

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All lands will be enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area system and will be managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR. All acquired lands will meet the minimum initial development standards for WMAs. All acquisitions will be restored and/or enhanced to as high quality as practicable, with the knowledge that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result in lower management costs. In addition, our local Pheasants Forever chapter members and volunteers maintain a high interest in seeing the habitat and productivity of acquired parcels are at high-quality levels. PF and partners including the DNR and USFWS will develop an ecological restoration and management plan for each parcel. Grant and partner dollars will also be used for the initial site development and restoration/enhancement work.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer to MNDNR	MN DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Monitoring	Maintenance	Management

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

Yes

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition?

No

Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:

At minimum we will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the state and follow up with questions prior to acquisition. In cases where there is interest, we will also indicate our willingness to attend or ask to attend county or township meetings to communicate our interest in the projects and seek support.

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:

A limited number of the parcels may have a federal or state easement on a portion of the tract which provides permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. If a parcel has one of these encumbrances, and is still deemed a high priority by the partners, we will follow guidance established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the residual value of the protected portion of the property.

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

The primary purposes of WMAs are to develop and manage for the production of wildlife and for compatible outdoor recreation. To fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife. This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources. There are no immediate plans to use farming for winter food on any of the parcels in this proposal.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated?

True

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

No Variation from State of Minnesota regulations.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

State of Minnesota

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

No

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2017
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2017
Purchase agreements	02/01/2018
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/14/2018
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2018
Purchase agreements	09/01/2018
Close on tracts	01/01/2020
Restorations completed	06/30/2022

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2022

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$34,700	-	-	\$34,700
Contracts	\$490,700	\$22,400	Federal, Private, PF	\$513,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$4,913,600	\$275,500	Federal, Private, PF	\$5,189,100
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$900	-	-	\$900
Professional Services	\$60,300	-	-	\$60,300
Direct Support Services	\$7,500	-	-	\$7,500
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$55,000	-	-	\$55,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$40,300	-	-	\$40,300
Grand Total	\$5,603,000	\$297,900	-	\$5,900,900

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Field Staff	0.05	3.0	\$12,800	-	-	\$12,800
PF State Coordinator - MN	0.03	3.0	\$9,300	-	-	\$9,300
PF Grant Staff	0.05	3.0	\$12,600	-	-	\$12,600

Amount of Request: \$5,603,000

Amount of Leverage: \$297,900

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 5.32%

DSS + Personnel: \$42,200

As a % of the total request: 0.75%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

We have reduced accomplishments/costs proportionately across the overall program to accommodate the reduced appropriation.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, land value donations,

contractor donations and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF has an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for restoration, enhancement and initial development of the protected acres. This could include but is not limited to wetland/grassland restoration, tree removal, prescribed fire, building removal, parking lots, signage, and other development activities.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

-

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

No

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

1.5% rate on \$497,100 (Personnel, Contracts, Travel, Professional Services)

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

07/01/2017

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	178	834	0	0	1,012
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	178	834	0	0	1,012

How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	12
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	12

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$985,500	\$4,617,500	-	-	\$5,603,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$985,500	\$4,617,500	-	-	\$5,603,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	44	119	0	849	0	1,012
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	44	119	0	849	0	1,012

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$243,600	\$658,900	-	\$4,700,500	-	\$5,603,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$243,600	\$658,900	-	\$4,700,500	-	\$5,603,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
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Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$5,536	\$5,536	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$5,536	\$5,536	-	\$5,536	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Number of acres of wetlands and uplands protected and restored.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ *Number and acres of wetlands protected and restored. Number of acquisitions that provide additional access to existing public lands.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Number of new parcels protected. Number of parcels added to existing habitat complexes and resulting percent increase in permanently protected acres of habitat complex.*

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

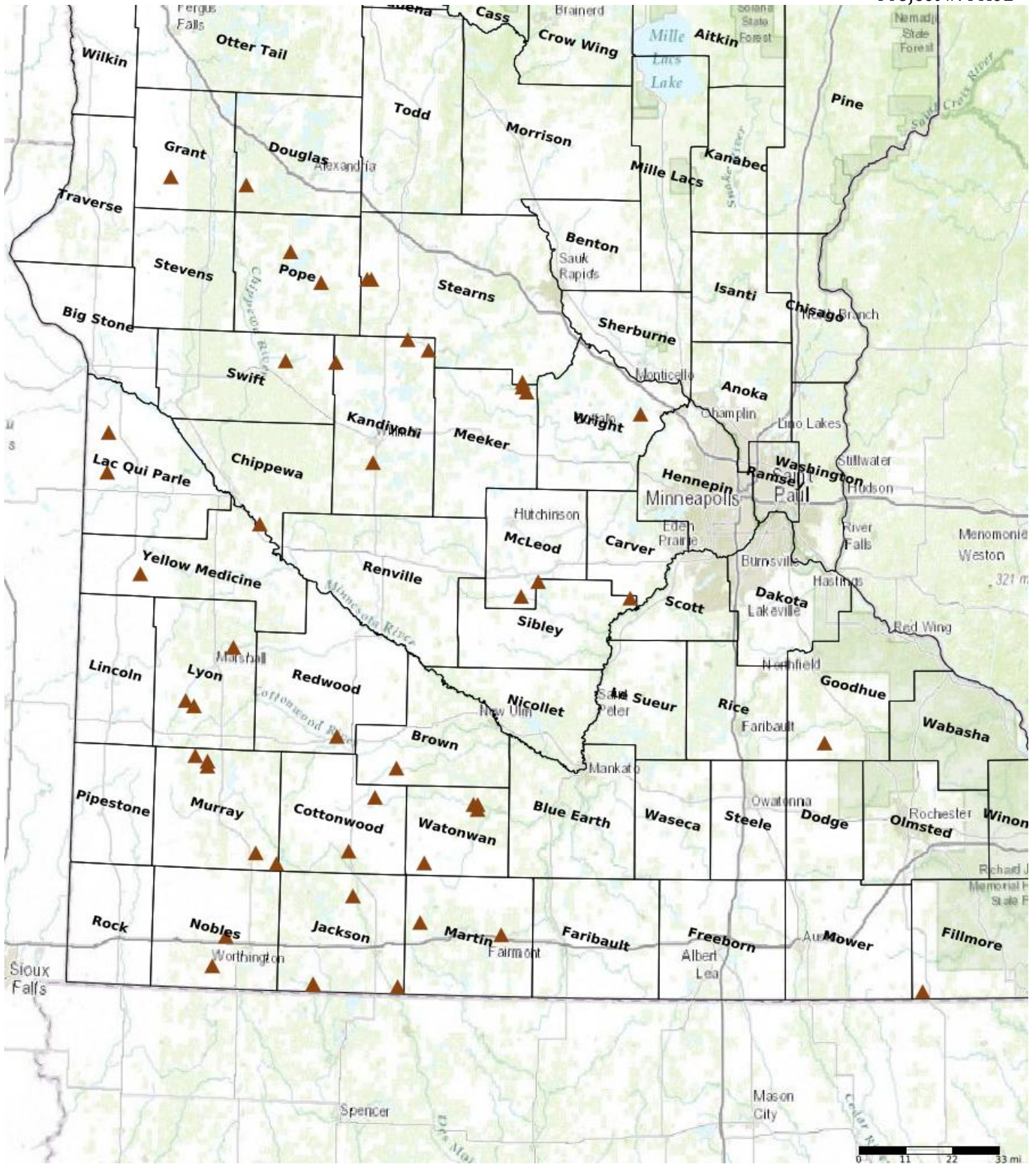
Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Terri WMA Addition	Brown	10834215	152	\$160,000	Yes
Spartan WMA Addition	Chippewa	11639218	66	\$360,000	No
Byholt Marsh WMA Addition	Chippewa	11835210	145	\$1,000,000	No
Farhagen WMA Addition Tr. 2	Cottonwood	10536211	79	\$330,000	No
Rock Ridge WMA Addition	Cottonwood	10735214	59	\$125,000	Yes
Beaver Creek WMA Addition	Fillmore	10113228	320	\$2,200,000	No
TBD WMA	Goodhue	10917216	160	\$710,000	No
Blakesley WMA Addition	Grant	12843233	269	\$900,000	No
Caraway WMA Addition	Jackson	10436225	99	\$800,000	No
Petersburg WMA Addition	Jackson	10134226	116	\$650,000	Yes
Sioux Valley WMA Addition	Jackson	10137228	246	\$2,000,000	No
Regal Meadows WMA Addition	Kandiyohi	12234201	100	\$500,000	No
Regal Flats WMA Addition	Kandiyohi	12233214	226	\$750,000	No
Caerulean WMA Addition	Lac qui Parle	11945219	152	\$650,000	No
NE Four Corners WMA Addition	Lac qui Parle	11845231	88	\$340,000	No
Brawner Lake WMA Addition	Lyon	11042217	121	\$365,000	No
Ringneck Ravine WMA Addition	Lyon	11042222	28	\$196,000	No
Green Valley WMA Addition	Lyon	11240219	80	\$480,000	No
Caron WMA Addition	Martin	10333222	140	\$940,000	No
Gruven WMA Addition Tr. 2	Martin	10330235	195	\$1,250,000	No
Kingston WMA Addition	Meeker	12129227	40	\$160,000	No
Kingston WMA Addition	Meeker	12129221	40	\$180,000	No
Skandia WMA Addition	Murray	10841219	463	\$2,300,000	No
Haberman WMA Addition	Murray	10539218	80	\$450,000	No
Talcot Lake WMA Addition	Murray	10539225	40	\$150,000	No
Iron Lake WMA Addition	Murray	10842210	14	\$50,000	No
Herlein Boote WMA Addition	Nobles	10241212	155	\$1,100,000	No
Ransom Ridge WMA Addition	Nobles	10141209	320	\$1,500,000	No
Chippewa Falls WMA Addition	Pope	12437209	36	\$150,000	No
Lamberton WMA Addition	Redwood	10936217	160	\$800,000	No
Faxon WMA Addition	Sibley	11425223	18	\$80,000	No
Bob Gehlen WMA Addition	Sibley	11428206	20	\$75,000	No
Mel Roehrl WMA Addition Tr. 3	Stearns	12435204	160	\$600,000	No
Mel Roehrl WMA Addition Tr. 4	Stearns	12435205	120	\$500,000	No
L. Daniel and Virginia Freenzel WMA	Stearns	12129216	240	\$1,500,000	No
Bench WMA Addition	Swift	12238231	80	\$300,000	No
Younger Brothers WMA Addition	Watonwan	10731222	40	\$200,000	No

Younger Brothers WMA Addition	Watowan	10731226	70	\$325,000	No
Younger Brothers WMA Addition	Watowan	10731223	69	\$330,000	No
Pelican Lake WMA Addition	Wright	12024218	130	\$884,000	No
Upper Antelope Valley WMA Addition	Yellow Medicine	11444209	34	\$51,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Roy Thompson WMA	Douglas	12740204	240	\$800,000	No	1	\$0
Sioux Valley WMA Addition	Jackson	10137228	21	\$150,000	No	2	-
Sunburg WMA	Kandiyohi	12236231	68	\$300,000	No	4	\$0
Spiering WMA Addition	McLeod	11429221	107	\$925,000	No	2	\$0
Lake Maria WMA Addition	Murray	10841218	160	\$1,120,000	No	3	\$0
Star Lake WMA	Pope	12538208	462	\$1,100,000	No	1	\$5,000
Fossum WMA Addition	Watowan	10533223	130	\$800,000	No	1	\$2,000



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other

Parcel Map
Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area
Program - Phase IX
(Data Generated From Parcel List)

